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Multicultural Ministry: Theory, Practice, Theology

BY TOINETTE M. EUGENE

Introduction

The fact that there are now challenges to minister to different cultural groups within the same geographic area hardly needs to be proven anymore. Especially in urban centers on this continent, different ethnic communities jostle each other in neighborhoods, in schools and churches, and in the workplace. The problem is, of course, not a new one; this country has seen a steady flow of immigrants and refugees from the very beginning. But the pace and the variety have intensified. The 1990 U.S. census indicates that this country became more culturally diverse during the 1980s than in any other decade in this century. The Asian population increased 114% in the 1980s; there are now at least twenty-two distinctive Spanish-speaking cultures represented in the United States. There are now parts of the country where no cultural group constitutes the majority of the local population (Los Angeles County being perhaps the most diverse). Only Australia is proportionately more diverse culturally than the United States.

These changes affect not only the coasts and the big cities; even relatively homogeneous parts of the country now feel the tensions that the encounter between cultures can create. Our economy is deeply interdependent in its ownership, its markets, its flow of goods. Recent debates about what constitutes an "American-made" automobile illustrate the fact of a multicultural existence: Does the Americanness depend on the ownership of the company? Where the assembly takes place and who does it? The percentage of parts manufactured in this country? The discussions go on and on. People in rural areas thus partici-

pate in the encounter (and sometimes clash) of peoples as much as those living in centers of direct immigration.

The church is called to minister in these situations, and is often unprepared to do so. This is especially so because of important shifts in attitudes toward cultural minority groups that began to take place in the 1960s. Prior to the 1960s, immigrant communities were urged to give up cultural practices that would hinder their assimilation into the mainstream of society. These cultural practices—language, customs, and the like—could be maintained in the private circle of the family, but would need to be forfeited in the workplace, the school, and the larger society. In return for doing this the dominant culture promised the benefits of the liberal ideology that grounded its approach to life in the United States: social mobility, economic prosperity, and participation in wider civic life.

However, it became apparent in the 1960s that the same dominant culture was not delivering on these promises to some groups—especially African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanic Americans. Race was a principle reason for this. Consequently these and other groups experiencing this discrimination began to insist on not assimilating but maintaining their distinctive features. Rather, they suggested, the dominant culture would have to accommodate to them. As the language of the 1970s put it, America went from an ideology of the melting pot to that of the salad bowl. Some ethnic groups proclaimed themselves “unmeltable.” In the 1980s, the continuing discussion evolved into the language of multiculturalism.

The vocabulary of multiculturalism has helped the church see the complexity of the issue without necessarily providing a great deal of guidance about what to do. That cultures in their integrity should be esteemed and affirmed; that cultural differences should be celebrated, not repressed; that it is not simply a matter of accommodating minority cultures to the dominant culture, but also the other way around—all of this is accepted by most people trying to be sensitive to the human and pastoral needs of diverse groups. Likewise, conservative critics have made us aware that the language of multiculturalism can be misused. It has been wielded as a weapon to bash western European cultures, and to promote often uncritical agendas of self-interest (e.g., Bloom 1988; D’Souza 1991). The latter has been evident in some of the debates in education. Others fear that emphasis on multiculturalism will undo the glue that holds a pluralistic society together (e.g., Schlesinger 1991).

But despite the confusions and the potential misuses of multicultural language it still reflects a reality that churches have to deal with. A Presbyterian minister on Chicago’s North Side told me some years ago that he knew of fifty-three language groups within his parish boundaries, five of which held services in his church each weekend. What do ministers do when they are called to serve several cultural groups in the same area? And how do dioceses, district, and other judicatories organize themselves to support both communities and their ministers in these mosaics of cultures?

This essay tries to offer some suggestions about this. First, how to approach

this question of multicultural ministry. Ministerial mindsets are still often shaped by dominant-culture dreams of assimilation (especially if the minister comes from the dominant culture). Wanting to affirm cultural difference is a necessary starting point, but is not enough. Thus some ways of thinking about multicultural settings give a framework for approaching the matter in a fresh way. Then there can be a move to a second concern; namely, some practical things can be suggested to implement more effective multicultural ministries.

These first two parts draw heavily on the social sciences and studies in intercultural communication. For the minister, however, something more is needed: a theology that gives coherence to ministry in multicultural settings. That will be taken up in the third part of this essay.

Frameworks for Understanding Multicultural Settings

It is important to have a basic respect and esteem for each of the cultures in which and between which one ministers. Without that, multicultural ministry is bound to fail. The minister expressing these values of respect and esteem sets the stage for people responding in trust to the minister. They also bespeak the minister's willingness to learn from people in the culture. The question then arises: what is the next step?

For someone having responsibility to offer ministry to several cultures at the same time—especially when the minister is not a member of any of the cultures or of only one of the several cultures present—it becomes important to have ways of viewing the workings of culture. This is so not only in order to understand each culture, but also how cultures will be able to interact. So-called subjective views of culture, where each culture is considered unique, are useful if one is being immersed in a single culture. Approaches like Clifford Geertz's "thick description" can then be used (Geertz 1973). But more objective approaches are needed to complement the subjective ones in multicultural settings. Objective approaches stress commonalities between cultures in their structures and processes. These do not homogenize cultures; rather, they emphasize similar dynamics that allow us to compare and relate cultures. And multicultural ministry frequently involves relating different cultures to one another.

Using the results of objective studies that have investigated a variety of cultures and cultural characteristics, I would like to suggest frameworks for understanding (1) adaptation in cultural groups, (2) elements of analysis for relating cultural groups, (3) communication patterns, and (4) patterns of attributional response)

1. Adaptation in cultural groups

An important thing to keep in mind is that while a culture group in the United States might look like and even consider itself to be the same as it was

in its home setting, it takes on a different set of dynamics in an immigrant situation. That Honduran Americans came from Honduras is important for their identity. However, their constant encounter with nonHonduran groups every day in the United States means that they are not the same as they once were. Life in Honduras continues to change, but Honduran American life changes in a very different way. Cultures become "ethnic" in an immigrant setting, whether they want to or not. This becomes especially important generationally as children are born and grow up in the new setting, never having seen the home setting. What happens is that the language gets corrupted or even forgotten, home customs take on different or even exaggerated importance in the new setting, and new relations are negotiated. Indeed, these processes of change are going on all the time.

It is important for ministers and leaders in a cultural group to recognize this. These dynamics affect both those who came to the new setting by choice and those forced into the new setting, i.e. refugees. Theorists such as James Banks have suggested that these processes of change within cultural groups go through cycles (Banks 1986:6-9). Modifying Banks' framework somewhat for a pastoral setting, I would suggest that there are four stages of adaptation to other cultures (especially those seen as dominant to or more powerful than the culture group which must adapt).

The first stage is *accommodation*. During this stage, the culture group tries to come to terms with the dominant group and to gain the rewards promised by the dominant group in return for giving up features of its cultural distinctiveness. At a certain point, frustration builds up about not being accepted by the dominant culture that leads, in turn, to a scrutiny for the causes of this breakdown. Then a second stage sets in, that of *separation*. Here the culture group closes in on itself to protect its identity and repair its self-esteem after the bruising failures of accommodation. New emphasis is placed on the culture's language and folkways. A somewhat exaggerated cultural identity often emerges. When this rejuvenation is sufficient, a third stage of *dialogue* occurs in which the adapting culture group, now surer of itself and wiser about the dominant culture, will press its claims for its rightful place in the larger picture. If the dialogue is successful, the fourth stage of adaptation, described as *institutionalization*, takes place wherein certain features of the adapting cultural group gain acceptance in the wider culture. In this fourth stage, a certain level of assimilation into the dominant culture has taken place, but not at the expense of loss of identity.

Banks notes that these four stages of adaptation are not a one-time process, but rather a recurring cycle that cultural groups go through negotiating their identity in terms of the dominant culture or other surrounding cultures. What becomes important for the minister and the leadership in the adapting cultural groups is not just to look at themselves as Vietnamese, Haitians, and Mexicans, but to see themselves as *ethnic* Vietnamese, Haitians, and Mexicans who are likely to be in one of these four stages of cultural adaptation at any given time. Moreover, different generations within the same cultural group may be at dif-

ferent stages of adaptation. Thus recovery of identity (separation stage) is usually more important for third-generation members of a cultural group than it is for second-generation members. Ministers and leaders should, therefore, try to identify where in the adaptation process each cultural group is. That helps in charting their needs at a specific time and in responding to those needs. Likewise, by comparing where cultural groups are at any given time, it becomes clearer if there is any likelihood of groups working together. Forging common links works best when two groups are both at the dialogue stage.

Banks also suggests that groups maintain their cultural distinctiveness in three areas: identity, sources of moral authority, and frameworks of meaning for explaining life. Cultural distinctiveness will not be surrendered unless each of these are found at a satisfactory level in the larger community. Thus, groups told that they are culturally inferior or "deprived" will cling to their distinctiveness all the more, since being labeled inferior is not a satisfactory alternative to being "ethnic."

2. *Categories for relating cultures*

A good deal of cross-cultural study has been done on cultural characteristics. Hofstede (1984) studied forty countries to derive a set of four categories that would allow comparative studies of cultures. His work has been expanded by a group of researchers to six categories (Hecht, Andersen, and Ribeau 1988). These are summarized briefly here. Each of these categories describes a dimension of culture that can be seen as an axis or continuum upon which a characteristic of the culture can be described.

A culture can be viewed from its approach to *immediacy*. "High contact" cultures emphasize standing in close proximity, eye contact, smiling, touching. These kinds of cultures occur frequently in South America, Eastern and Southern Europe, and among Arabs. On the other end of the spectrum are "low contact" cultures that emphasize distance and less sensory involvement. These are frequently found in North America, Western Europe and Asia.

The second category is *individualism-collectivism*. This spectrum defines how people live together, what they value, and why they communicate. In Hofstede's aforementioned study, the five most individualistic countries (ranked) were the U.S., Australia, Great Britain, Canada, and the Netherlands. The five most collectivistic were Venezuela, Columbia, Pakistan, Peru, and Taiwan.

Gender is the third category. From the research, a masculinity index measured attitudes about strength, assertiveness, competitiveness, and ambition, while the femininity index measured affection, compassion, nurturance and emotionality as values. In terms of these scales, Hofstede found Japan, Australia, Venezuela, Italy, and Switzerland the highest in the masculinity index, and Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Finland the highest in the femininity index.

Power distance is the fourth dimension, describing the degree to which power, prestige and wealth are equally distributed. High power distance cultures tend

to concentrate these in the hands of a few; low power distance cultures distribute more widely. Hofstede found the Philippines, Mexico, Venezuela, India and Singapore to have the highest power indices. Lowest power distance countries were Austria, Israel, Denmark, New Zealand, and Ireland.

Uncertainty, the fifth dimension, refers to the ability to tolerate risk, uncertainty, and ambiguity in a culture. Those countries with the lowest tolerance of uncertainty were Greece, Portugal, Belgium, Japan and Peru. Those with the greatest tolerance of uncertainty were Singapore, Denmark, Sweden, Hong Kong and Ireland. Hofstede also notes that predominantly Catholic countries are usually less tolerant of ambiguity, while Protestant, Hindu, and Buddhist cultures are more tolerant.

High and low context provides the final dimension. High context cultures rely on the environment and social relationships to communicate, with less information explicitly encoded. Low context settings try to provide most of the information explicitly. Thus communication between longtime friends or family members is likely to be high context, whereas computer communication is low context—everything needs to be made explicit. Hofstede does not provide research on this axis of high and low context, but the aforementioned researchers provide some speculations. Asian and Native American cultures rely on high context modes of communication. Northern European cultures and the dominant cultures in North America are more low context.

It becomes useful for ministers and leaders in cultural groups to think about how the cultures of which they are a part and to which they must relate might be plotted on these various axes. Where a culture is on each of these axes helps explain both values and what will constitute effective communication. A culture may adapt its approach to accommodate others in the new setting or, at the stage of separation, exaggerate its differences.

3. *Communication patterns*

So much of multicultural ministry has to do with the ability to engage in intercultural communication. There are four sets of issues about which ministers must be aware.

The first is the relation of *language use to identity*. Language is more than a means of communication; our very identity is wrapped up in it. Think of the experience of going to a place where you know the language imperfectly or hardly at all. The feelings of inadequacy and insecurity are strong. People will have a tendency to treat you like a child (engage in baby-talk) or as less intelligent than you really are because you cannot express yourself. A not-infrequent experience adult members of culture groups have is being treated as children by their pastors, often unintentionally, because of inadequate competence in the language. Both a minister's ability to use the language of the culture group, and how the minister responds to the use of the dominant language by the culture group member are crucial to effective multicultural ministry.

The second is understanding the role of *nonverbal cues*. Eye contact, physical proximity, touching, body language, laughter and voice tone all vary as carriers

of messages. They are exceedingly important in high context communication. Realizing how these function in the cultures to which one ministers, and how they function in one's own culture can make the difference in effective multicultural ministry.

Third, the alternation of *speech and silence* in communication is important. High context cultures tend to allow for silence as a vehicle for communication, whereas low context cultures prize speech, and see silence as noncommunication. Anyone who has worked with Native American peoples, for example, knows the importance of silence as a communicative vehicle.

Fourth, the *communicative rule system* of a cultural group must be known. In other words, all the rules about how to ask questions, how to convey an undesired response (i.e., how to say no), how to vary communication patterns with persons of different age or gender—every culture has an elaborate system of rules about these things. Not to understand these patterns is to fail to communicate.

Many of the issues noted are things ministers learn through experience—often in failed communication. This can be instructive, but it should be noted that one can learn them in a more systematic way to enhance multicultural ministry.

4. *Patterns of attributional response*

Attributional response has to do with how we read someone's communication from another group, and how we respond to them on the basis of that reading. This is especially important in how we relate to the other. Intercultural communication theory distinguishes *dispositional* attributions, that explain why the other says or does what it says or does on the basis of personality, attitudes, social institutions of that group, and beliefs; and *situational* attributions, based on the context in which the communication occurs (Gudykunst and Gumbs 1988:210). What groups tend to do is to attribute positive behavior of their own group to dispositional factors (e.g., they did that because they have the right values), and negative behavior to situational factors (e.g., unfortunate circumstances). Those familiar with the Romance languages see this embedded in language itself, where unfavorable events are explained in the third person reflexive (e.g., "se rompió la copa," "the cup broke itself" versus "rumpí la copa," which would mean, "I [meant to] broke the cup"). A problem in intercultural communication is that this pattern of dispositional and situation attribution is usually reversed when outgroup behavior is evaluated: if they did something well, it was because of the environment; if bad, it was their attitude (Jaspars and Hewstone 1982). The latter presents a frequent pastoral problem, best overcome by (1) making ingroup members more comfortable with outgroup members by getting to them as individuals, and (2) broadening the kinds and numbers of casual factors in the attribution processes.

Practical Suggestions for Intercultural Ministry

What practical suggestions might be derived from the use of these different frameworks for understanding culture and intercultural communications? As has been noted throughout, the perspective of the minister to many cultural groups at once, and the communities themselves need to be kept in mind. The suggestions that follow focus on both the minister and the communities.

The Minister

Three things provide a focus for a minister becoming better prepared for multicultural ministry. The first is language. Dominant-culture Americans tend to be monolingual and think it a great achievement if they learn a second language. People in nondominant cultural communities must negotiate at least two and often more languages. Language learning is indispensable for multicultural ministry, not only for better communication, but to appreciate the identity of the community. Ministers should set themselves the goal of learning one language well, and at least one more language adequately. The fact that the minister cares enough to try to learn counts for so much.

Likewise it is worthwhile for the minister to become more aware how language shapes identity. Third-generation members of a culture group may speak that group's indigenous language badly, but speaking it in some fashion is a badge of identity in the community. Likewise, research has shown that, when confronted with an undesirable outgroup member speaking the ingroup's language, the ingroup will resort to highly colloquial language use to exclude the outgroup member. This can say a lot about identity.

Second, being able to situate where a culture group is in the adaptation process can help shape pastoral strategies. A group in the accommodation phase will need help identifying and channelling its anger and frustrations. The separation phase calls for a celebration of the culture's special gifts. The dialogue phase is crucial: it helps cultures see themselves as others see them, and see themselves as a changing culture amid other changing cultures. The institutionalization phase requires helping the culture see how it has been assimilated, both positively and negatively, into its larger environment.

Third, communicative competence—the capacity to understand the communication pathways of a culture—requires knowing how the culture communicates and how it feels in the presence of other cultures. The better that is implicitly known, the more effective communicator the minister will be. The better that is explicitly articulated, the better the minister will be able to help the culture group itself come to a greater awareness.

For the community, there are some practical goals as well that can be suggested by the minister, but need to be taken up within the community itself. First of all, communities need to acknowledge their ethnicity. That is, they must realize that they are not the same culture they were in their home country. To be aware of those changes is a gift probably only given to the first generation or to those who visit the home country frequently. To say that they are

not the same does not mean they have no identity. It is simply a reminder that a process of change is happening. Understanding that will help ease the pain of the inevitable change that comes about. It is the first step in helping a community to see where it is going.

Second, more often than not, racism is an issue, experienced both at the hands of the dominant culture, but also evoked in the friction between cultures. Both ministers and leadership need to draw attention on a regular basis to the insidious ways racism obtrudes upon communication.

Third, generational changes add another layer to the complexities of intercultural communication, since each successive generation deals with the relation to the culture group's identity (and with that, its sense of sources of authority and meaning) in a different way. The adaptation and language issues are intensified exponentially in the second and third generations. Sensitivity to these changes is essential for effective communication and ministry.

Finally, two very practical suggestions. To the extent that members of different cultural groups get to know each other as persons and not just as members of outgroups, intercultural communication is improved. The second suggestion is to encourage multiple memberships, i.e., for members of a cultural group to see themselves as members of several groups. Parish organizations provide a vehicle for this. Research suggests that people with multiple memberships are more tolerant of outgroup members than those who identify solely with their cultural group.

Toward a Theology for Intercultural Ministry

Persons in ministry do not live by social science research; they need nourishment from the Word of God. There is no theology for intercultural ministries that has been well developed, although there are local theologies of culture groups who have come to terms with their location in the wider society. James Banks has suggested there are three elements that are the goals of multiculturalism in education that I would like to adapt for multicultural ministry. These might be called (1) cultural *pluralism*, which emphasizes the values and gifts of each culture; (2) cultural *difference*, which highlights the special features of each culture; and (3) cultural *relatedness*, that looks to the new reality formed by the genuine coming together and dialogue between cultures. It seems to me that all three are needed in a healthy multiculturalism and a multicultural ministry. Without the first, a culture's integrity is not respected and a mindless assimilation takes place. Without the second, important elements of identity are lost to the culture group, and important perspectives are lost for others. Without the third, we can end up without a genuine sense of unity and have only a system of noncommunicating monads.

As a way of getting started with a theology of multicultural ministry and a spirituality by which to live it out, I would suggest thinking of biblical stories or

narrations that might exemplify each of the three goals of cultural pluralism, difference and relatedness. Might the Pentecost narrative exemplify the pluralism motif—each nation hearing the Gospel in its own tongue, implying that every tongue is a worthy vehicle of the gospel? Might the story of Ruth exemplify the value of cultural difference—how God works through foreignness to bring salvation? Feminist exegetes who have explored the theme of women as ‘other’ in the Bible might suggest 144,000 or the elect of the book of Revelation, coming from every tribe and tongue, people and nation, exemplify relatedness—having come through the great tribulation (and such is cultural adaptation!), now a new people but in continuity with their past, all bearing the seal of the Lamb? The eschatological nature of the image reminds us that truly effective multicultural ministry is still ahead of us, but is a goal worth pursuing.

By expanding the list of stories in each category, we will have the beginnings of a biblical theology of multicultural ministry.

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Beyond Theological Tourism

BY SUSAN THISTLETHWAITE

Tourists of the Revolution

How do you provide pedagogy for oppressors? This question has bedeviled socially conscious North American theological education for the two decades since the energy and insight of theological reflection has passed so decisively to the two-thirds world. In the 1970's when everybody read Gustavo Gutierrez, we talked about 'solidarity.' Solidarity was supposed to mean a praxis of mutuality between those who have inherited national, race, class or gender privilege and those denied these privileges. While some, such as participants in efforts like Witness for Peace, did in fact learn to act out a mutuality which involved serious personal commitment and risk, for a much larger number of North American seminarians, clergy and church members, solidarity rolled easily and trippingly off the tongue and came to mean relief efforts for Central America or South Africa. Central Americans on the receiving end of this charitable work joked about 'tourists of the revolution.'

Tourism is only beginning to be examined seriously by political scientists and sociologists. Tourism, like the family, has been deemed a 'private' activity and and has never been subject to systematic scrutiny, and certainly has never been

This article is a piece from the forthcoming book, *Beyond Theological Tourism: Mentoring as a Grassroots Method in Theological Education* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1994)

regarded as a topic for theological construction. Yet, for a theological enterprise that is claiming the title "global," to ignore the ideology of tourism is a serious error. As Cynthia Enloe writes,

Tourism has its own political history, reaching back to the Roman empire. It overlaps with other forms of travel that appear to be less dedicated to pleasure. Government missions, military tours of duty, business trips, scientific explorations, forced migrations—women and men have experienced them differently, in ways that have helped construct today's global tourism industry and the international political system it sustains.¹

Who travels for 'pleasure' and why, how this dovetails with patterns in international economics, and its secularized cultural mission results² are all questions for investigation for a theology that would pretend to be global. The United Nations World Tourism Organization forecasts that by the year 2000, tourism will have become the single most important global economic activity.³

The impact of travel on the formation of consciousness could be found more centrally in literature when to travel meant to be an adventurer, when journeys were arduous and to attempt to travel long distances meant that personal risk was involved. And so popular literature became littered, in the nineteenth century, with "Mr. So-and-So's Egyptian Diary" or "Two Years in Darkest Africa" by Colonel Whomever. But the advent of air travel changed dramatically the amount of personal risk involved in foreign travel and in the latter half of the twentieth century the 21 countries in two weeks phenomenon has replaced adventure with endurance.

Why consider tourist travel as a means into a theological treatment of globalization? It was a truism, but none the less true for being a truism, of the early years of the modern women's movement, that the personal is the political. This meant that what everybody assumes are natural relationships, such as the family, are really relationships fraught with power dynamics backed up by the more familiarly political realm of the public. This insight generated the examination of power dynamics in the family and led to the battered women's movement, the anti-rape struggles and eventually to the public disclosure of the extent of childhood sexual abuse. The theologies of the family that supported the view that the unequal power relationships between men and women were natural were subjected to scrutiny for their ideological blindness and their investment in the maintenance of inequality and exploitation.

In light of the tourist phenomenon, we need to engage a similar kind of ideology critique: the personal is the international.⁴ The fact of millions of economically privileged people engaging in international travel is not private and personal, a mere pursuit of pleasure, as the dictionary defines tourism. There is a profound relation of this travel to patterns of international trade, debt, investment, treaties, and ultimately, the new forms of colonialism. Furthermore, the appearance of objectivity, of non-involvement of the tourist must be subject to critique.

What is the appeal of foreign travel to the economically privileged? In the

place of adventure, of risk, of the connotations of journey for the passage of the human being through life, is the mode of observation of the exotic. This desire to see everything is similar to the prison Michel Foucault describes as the Penopticon where the inmates are arranged behind stories of glass walls; they are under constant observation. The purpose of foreign travel is to see things not seen at home and to contrast one's own existence with the exotic other. Allowing no privacy is the torture the inhabitants of Foucault's prison undergo, it is a form of torture actually often employed in prisons around the world. The tourist who travels to see how others live without engaging them in any encounter but receiving service is just a little violation, it seems. But it is connected to the way power is distributed around the world. In fact, the exponential increase of international tourism greatly facilitates the other invasions of neo-colonialism as it prepares the inhabitants of an observed culture for their role as passive object and persuades the tourist of the superiority of his or her way of life 'back home'. In his brilliant travelogue on Asia, Pico Iyer writes

In 1985, another influence was also carrying American dollars and dreams to every corner of the world with more force and more urgency than every before: people. Tourists were the great foot soldiers of the new invasion; tourists, in a sense, were the terrorists of cultural expansionism, what Sartre once called "the cool invaders." Scarcely forty years ago, most of the world's secret places were known only to adventurers, soldiers, missionaries and a few enterprising traders; in recent years, however, the secrets were open, and so too was the world—anyone with a credit card could become a lay colonialist. Nepal, which had never seen a tourist until 1955, now welcomed 200,000 foreign visitors each year; China, which had rigidly closed its doors for decades, had 11,000 tourists a day clambering along the Great Wall by 1985. The road to Mandalay and even the road to Xanadu were crowded now with Westerners—men in search of women, dreamers in search of enlightenment, traders in search of riches. In 1985, many Asians considered the single great import from the West, after Rambo, to be AIDS.⁵

But the quest to observe the exotic other has also, as Iyer so aptly describes his travels in Asia, become an experience in looking in cultural mirror and, like fun-house mirrors, seeing one's own reflection, but with the contours grossly changed. And so, on our foreign immersions for the Plowshares Immersion Project, we went to a Dunkin' Donuts in Taipei or a 'Chicago bar' in Hong Kong. In the mountains of the Philippines, where Dow Edgerton describes the brutality of so-called low intensity warfare on the inhabitants, we turned a corner on our long hike and met a man on a donkey with a boom-box belting out Madonna singing "Like a Prayer."

The Self/Other Problem

How do I come to know the otherness of other people in a way that neither collapses their subjectivity into mine, nor makes them into an exotic other?

Philosophers and theologians have been bedeviled for centuries over the meaning of the self-other relationship. For our purposes, the real question is not an abstract one of subject-object, but how can I come to know another and the world in which they dwell in a way that not only transforms us as individuals, but enables us *together* to transform the world? (Doige, Barbour et al)

Knowing another human being is qualitatively different from knowing a math problem or that Monet was an impressionist painter. To know a human being is best understood as the mystery of encounter; this was first articulated systematically by Martin Buber in his description of the I-thou relationship.⁶ On the same line with Buber, but even more specifically emphasizing the mystery of human mutual presence, is Emmanuel Levinas' theme of "face" (*visage*). This is the irreducible reality of another which I must recognize, whether it inspires love or violence. Face seems to mean not the fact of the other, but the fact that as a social being I must acknowledge connection to another when I look at his or her face and see that this is a human being like me and yet this is not me. This connection exists whether it leads to life-long commitment or murder.⁷

There is a curious confirmation of the truth of what Levinas is arguing in regard to the face in the case of disease. Diseases that disfigure the face such as leprosy, bubonic plague, cholera or AIDS have the capacity to inspire the imagination to horror and revulsion. At the same time, virulent diseases that do not disfigure the face such as tuberculosis or influenza, give rise to little revulsion; in the case of tuberculosis, in fact, to a kind of romantic connotation of intellectual sensitivity. Influenza, which does not disfigure the face, is the worst "plague" the world has ever seen, killing 20 million in 1918, surpassing the numbers killed either in the great bubonic plagues of the high middle ages or the current AIDS crisis. The face does assert a mystery of what it means to be human, and certainly of what threatens our humanity.

But the abstract way in which philosophers such as Levinas, or Walter Farley, who employs the same metaphor of face to assert the possibility of human community in the 'face' of threats to community through alienation and despair, is not yet helpful in overcoming the problems of theological tourism. Farley argues for the imperative to subjectivity the face implies. What makes an encounter into an I-thou relationship (Buber) is that it is a *face-to-face* encounter.

The problem is that there are no faces per se. Where philosophers often fail in describing the human is in a too quick jump to the universal. What is meant to be taken as common to human beings in a concrete way (we all have faces) is allowed to slide over into the liabilities of the universal. There is no universal face. There are only specific kinds of faces that have colors, specific colors like dark brown, umber, pale yellow, ebony, coffee and there are specific noses, large, narrow, wide, stub and there are lips, full, thin, broad. The method of the general in regard to the human condition will inevitably mirror the old universals—white skin, narrow nose, thin lips—unless specific and historically rooted corrections are made over and over and over.

What makes the argument from the face for the mystery of the human encounter powerful is precisely the different topographies of human faces. What is threatening about the face of another is both the similarities and the differences. Differences mean that it might be possible to be human in another way than the way I have assumed it is 'right' and good to be human. The other must be remade into a mirror of the self in order to reduce the danger that there exists more than one proper way to be human.

Travel brochures, to return to the tourist motif, often choose models from other countries who have more European features. In Asia, women and children are recruited for prostitution from N. Thailand or Burma because 'they look the most white.' There are now villages in the northern part of Thailand where this recruiting has been done so heavily which have no children over the age of 5.

But too great a similarity can also be threatening in another, since if someone looks like me but has found a different way of being human, that way of being human is so clearly possible for me too. This is at the root of much of homophobia, the fear of homosexuals. Heterosexuals often fear homosexuals not because 'their lifestyle is so different,' but because a homosexual in a power suit is indistinguishable from a heterosexual in a power suit. The barriers between self and other are threatened with collapse.

It is only the image of the "hardened self" as Catherine Keller puts it, that is threatened by the human ability to be a "permeable self."⁸ Keller argues that the particularly Western symbolization of the self/other dichotomy has created an untenable transformation which requires that for a self to become *itself*, the other, often mythically portrayed as a female monster (Tiamat), must be externalized and defeated. Keller lays part of the blame for this demonization of the other at the door of Christian theology.

But let us not forget the theological sources of this transcendence. For it is the Christian tradition, in its conjunctions with Aristotelian philosophy, that bridges the long gap between ancient cosmogonies and theological existentialism, and that claims world-creating transcendence for human subjectivity.⁹

Promising directions in Christian theology, such as the incarnation, are not followed up for their refusal to divide the self and the world. Instead there is an increasing emphasis on separation and control which becomes the common soil of the doctrine of the human being in the West.

Toward a Doctrine of the Human Being

It is a large claim for the project of mentoring to pose it as an alternative theological anthropology. Yet, large claims are what is needed to shift the weight of theological education off of the academic centers where it has been resting for several centuries. The theological import of this volume is that a different way of being human is being proposed. This way of being human is predicated on the mystery of the encounter of self and other. But, unlike many such claims for an I-thou relationship, or of coming 'face-to-face' with the reality of

another human being, what is asserted here is that the human encounter is always in a concrete social context and that the encounter has a *purpose*, namely social and personal transformation.

The order of these is important, since we are countering a trend in liberal theological education which reduces everything to a 'personal growth experience.' As Yosh Ishida only half jokingly remarked to potential participants in the first foreign immersion experience of PIP, "no growth." By this he means that the purpose of the travel to S.E. Asia was not to be reduced to an intrapsychic experience, but was for the purpose of informing ourselves and others of the concrete conditions under which people struggle in these countries in order that we might, once back in the U.S., press for our countries' policies to be more in the direction of human rights, economic equality and democratic politics.

These problems of self and other have ordinarily, in philosophical and theological discourse, been abstracted from the concrete social conditions in which human beings, face and body together, are found. In all societies on the planet today, large differences exist in the material conditions in which different classes live—and there are significant differences within these classes of gender, race and ethnicity (i.e. worldwide, women with dependent children are 30% more likely to starve to death than males in the same social class; an older African-American woman who makes \$25,000 per year is not in the same social class in the United States as a young white male who makes the same salary).

The significance of gender, gender identity, race/ethnicity, class, national origin, or physical ability, to name a few parameters of concrete human life, has rarely been studied. It has only been with the advent of liberation theologies that the concrete differences in social location have even been taken into account in defining what it means to be human.

But virtually no one has done a theological anthropology that takes account of the *differences* in concrete social locations for the *transaction* of becoming human in the process of trying to transform the world. That is, how do we describe what it means to become human together when the real, material differences between human beings is made central? Furthermore, how is this relationship in difference constructed when we are engaged together in the act of world transformation? Do concrete differences and acting together constitute the possibility of a new human being? Could this not be something of what the Apostle Paul means when he speaks of New Creation?

Notes

1. Cynthia Enlow, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 1990), p.21
2. Pico Iyer, *Video Night in Kathmandu*

3. Enloe, *Bananas*, p. 20.
4. Enloe, *Bananas*, p. 195.
5. Pico Iyer, *Video Night in Kathmandu and Other Reports from the No-So-Far East* (New York: Random House, 1989), pp. 6-7.
6. Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York, N.Y. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970); also Donald L. Beer, *Mutuality: the Vision of Martin Buber* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1985).
7. See Walter Farley, *Good and Evil: Interpreting a Human Condition* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), p. 39.
8. Catherine Keller, *From Broken Web: Sexism, Separation and the Self* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), chap. 4.
9. Keller, *From a Broken Web*, p. 79.

Book Reviews

Vanishing Boundaries: The Religion of Mainline Protestant Baby Boomers. By Dean R. Hoge, Benton Johnson and Donald A. Luidens. Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994. 254 pp. \$17.99.

This sociological study of a carefully drawn sample of 500 adolescent confirmands in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who were 33 to 42 years old in 1989 explores facets of the religious beliefs and practices of persons who were born during the first part of the post World War II baby boom and addresses the reasons they give for leaving or staying in the church. It also contrasts their beliefs and practices with a sample of 125 adolescent confirmands of the same denomination who were 43 to 52 years old in 1989. The authors were able to find and to interview slightly under 60 percent of those in the selected population, and they are careful to note the possible bias of this response rate. Given this fact and given the small number of cases in some of the groups they analyze, the authors may have tried to present too refined an analysis of some of their data. Further, the survey research method they employed in one facet of their study, which tends to atomize a whole into real or constructed component parts, may have encouraged them to develop some indices which are of limited usefulness. Nonetheless, the broad findings of most interest are based on a solid data base. In fact, no other study of the religious beliefs and practices of the baby boomer generation with which this reviewer is acquainted has been based on such a carefully designed study.

The authors augmented their survey research material with profiles drawn from forty persons they interviewed in depth, enhancing the value of the study. They used a method of elaboration, a style of analysis commonly employed in survey

research studies, to try to determine the relative importance of a group of cultural, structural, and institutional factors to best explain membership decline. For one informed by a field theory perspective, such an approach may be suspect. Fortunately the authors present most of their data at a relatively low level of abstraction, so the data can be usefully appropriated by those who may question the basic mode of analysis the authors use to examine their data.

The introduction summarizes of the rise and decline in the membership of "mainline" Protestant churches in the United States since World War II. (In addition to the Presbyterian, the authors include the Episcopalian, Methodist, United Church of Christ, Disciples, Lutheran and Reformed denominations among "mainline" denominations.) The discussion exaggerates the situation somewhat by comparing membership trends in several denominations with the growth rate of the United States population. It should have addressed differential birth rates among various segments of the U.S. population and the change in immigration patterns, because these factors made the relative decline of "mainline" denominations almost inevitable.

Chapter 1 presents brief profiles of four representative persons the authors interviewed. Chapter 2 discusses the methods used in the study and summarizes key data about the interviewees. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 divide the interviewees into four "churched" types and four "unchurched" types and describe some of their characteristics. Chapter 6 uses a statistical analysis to try to discern some of the factors conditioning the current beliefs and practices of the various types of churched and unchurched people discussed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

In Chapter 7 the authors assess the theories of decline which they set forth in Chapter 1 and offer an explanation of their own based primarily on their analy-

ses of the data they gathered in this project. They hold that the ongoing public policy debates between liberals and conservatives in the several denominations, difficulties in particular congregations, or baby boomer participation in the counter culture of the 1960s have little to do with the decline in membership in mainline denominations. In fact, they think the major problem is a spiritual one. Mainline churches "...have lost members because, over the years, *beliefs* have been changing." (p.178) (The authors do not distinguish between spirit and belief.) Overall, while holding that clear evidence on specifics is lacking, the authors think the mainline Protestant decline is a result of multiple factors. This conclusion is certainly not a surprising one and is certainly consistent with their survey findings. They think "...the dominant explanation for mainline decline is a combination of the gradual weakening of mainline churches, changes in American culture, and the churches' policy of openness to change." (p. 202) The boundaries between mainline churches and the broader society are vanishing.

In the final chapter, the authors reflect on the implications of their findings for the ministry of mainline churches to the baby boomer generation. Employing a market view framework, they suggest the baby boomer generation wants "...high-quality Sunday school and youth programs, uplifting worship experiences, and meaningful, authentic small-group experiences." (p. 206)

Such expectations, scarcely novel or surprising, can be met, they suggest, by seeking to recapture traditional authority, by generating new bases for authority claims or by building church life without authority. Compared to the detailed analyses undertaken in main body of the text, this chapter is very thin. The authors do not cite (and probably are not very conversant with) the major efforts at theological reconstruction undertaken by

people such as Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Daniel Day Williams, Bernard Meland, and the Niebuhr brothers in the preceding generation and by various liberation, neo-orthodox and apologetic theologians in the present generation to address the question of truth. Certainly, such work is at the heart of any efforts to legitimate the truth claims of Christianity. The authors of this study can point to the problem, but they themselves provide no resources to address the problem constructively. In a similar vein, the discussion of the efforts of particular congregations to address issues of meaning and belonging in the context of the new situation of mainline Protestantism is minimal. It is probably too much to ask these authors to address these issues in depth and in scope. By raising these questions in the context of their study, they challenge those (who, this reviewer suspects, are relatively few in number) offering simple monocausal explanations for the numerical decline of mainline Protestantism or/and offering simple proposals for its renewal.

This reviewer commends this volume to all who are concerned with the numerical decline of mainline Protestantism. Its careful review of the sociological literature on the topic (with which readers of the *Register* may be unfamiliar), its painstaking examination of selected facets of the beliefs and practices of the baby boomers of one mainline denomination, and both the debunking and the constructive facets of its concluding discussions will enhance the reader's understanding of mainline Protestant decline and will raise evocative questions about fitting responses to the situation. At the same time, one will have to look elsewhere for resources to address the truth claims of Christianity or to explore creative ministries to baby boomers.

W. WIDICK SCHROEDER

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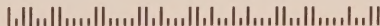


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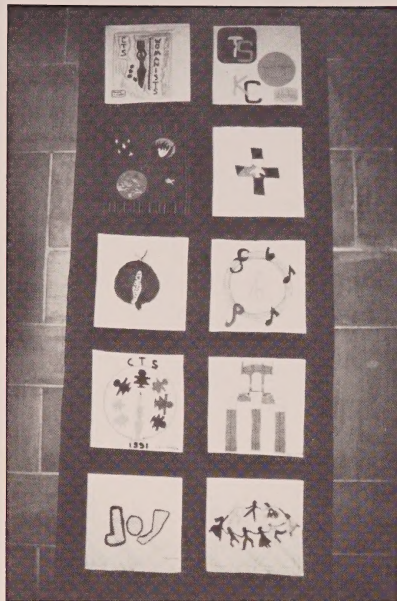
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Quilted wall hanging showing symbols of spirituality presented by CTS women's community in 1992.

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The Chicago Theological Seminary, a graduate school of theological education, invites you to a one-day conference for prospective students. Led by the Spirit, the time may be now for you to pursue theological education to respond to a call to ministry. We invite you to spend the day with us -- considering seminary and reflecting upon some of the most important questions of your life.

You'll meet faculty members and students, and learn about the academic programs and the Seminary community. You'll tour the Seminary facilities and visit classes. Our President, The Rev. Dr. Kenneth B. Smith and our Academic Dean, The Rev. Dr. William R. Myers, will share their insights into the special opportunities CTS offers students pursuing theological education in order to prepare for ministry or further academic study.

During your visit, you'll find that students come to CTS at different points in their lives -- some right out of college, others having worked for several years. Still others have raised children or pursued other career paths. You'll find a diverse group of people studying and working together in an atmosphere of academic creativity and freedom. A seminary of the United Church of Christ, CTS has a rich tradition of social justice activism and preparing students for ministry in a wide variety of settings.

As our guest, your day begins at 8:30 a.m. and continues until 3:00 p.m. with a complimentary lunch included. You'll have the opportunity to hear faculty presentations and obtain specific information about financial planning, housing, and curriculum. Bring your questions with you and join us for a unique day at The Chicago Theological Seminary.

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To register, complete and return the registration form to The Chicago Theological Seminary. Upon receipt of your registration, we'll send you an information packet containing a full schedule and directions to the Seminary. *There is no cost for this conference.*

- ☐ YES! Please register me for the 1994 Prospective Student Day on October 12, 1994. I understand there is no charge to prospective students and that lunch will be provided by the Seminary.

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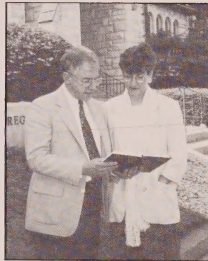
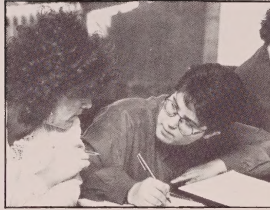
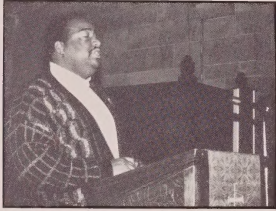
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CTS

TOWER NEWS

For Christ and the Churches

SUMMER 1994

In Tribute of Dr. Victor Obenhaus

Dr. Victor Obenhaus passed away on April 2, 1994. He had been associated with the Seminary from 1943 until his death. He was ninety years old at the time of his passing.

He retired as Professor of Christian Social Ethics in 1973 and served as Acting President until 1974. His father had been a member of the faculty of the German Department, one of the foreign language institutes sponsored by the Seminary at the turn of the century.

His death marks the end of an era at CTS, following as it does the passing of Ross Snyder and Arthur Cushman McGiffert. Snyder, McGiffert and Obenhaus were remarkable scholars and teachers and strong foundation stones of the Seminary.

A week after his death, family and friends gathered at Hyde Park Union Church for a memorial service.

During the service, Dr. W. Widick Schroeder, CTS Professor of Religion and Society, and a colleague and

friend of Vic and Marion for many decades, spoke with affection and profound appreciation of Vic's lasting contribution to the churches, the wider culture and those called to positions of leadership in ministry.

Dr. Schroeder, himself a student of Vic Obenhaus, paid tribute to his mentor in these words:

We assemble here today to memorialize a wonderful human being. Victor Obenhaus was a loving and devoted husband, a caring, sensitive

father and grandfather. He was genuinely concerned about the well being of those he knew and of those he did not know. He nurtured causes and institutions to which he was committed with diligence and thoughtfulness.

Victor Obenhaus had a rich and varied career. He was a minister in local churches and was the head of a mission-supported school committed to the education of Appalachian children. He was a professor who influenced ten generations of students for three decades, first on the faculty of the Federated Theological Faculty of the University of Chicago, and subsequently on the faculty of the Chicago Theological Seminary. He was a scholar whose writings sought to enhance the institutional life of Christian churches, to promote social justice in the world, and to facilitate lay people's reflection on the implications of the Christian faith for complex moral and public policy issues.

(continued on pg. 3)



Last September Vic and Marion celebrated 55 years of life together, his 90th birthday and 50 years on Woodlawn Avenue.

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From the President

Dr. Clyde Manschreck — A Faithful Servant

The Chicago Theological Seminary joins many friends in expressing its profound sympathy to Mrs. Ardis Manschreck and family in the passing of colleague and friend, Dr. Clyde Manschreck.

Dr. Manschreck joined the faculty of the Seminary as Professor of the History of Christianity in 1966. He served faithfully and with distinction until his retirement in 1983. During his tenure he gave unselfishly to students as they prepared for leadership in the churches and religious institutions. His scholarship and research are of the highest quality. He contributed richly to the academic environment of this institution and to the broader life of academe. He left his mark upon the Seminary. His living monuments are all of those who are

now serving the religious enterprise in a variety of ways.

Dr. Manschreck was a person of sterling character and deep faith. He was a model professor and human being and touched not only his students, but his colleagues as well. He will be deeply missed.

Upon his retirement, the Board of Trustees conferred upon him the title of Professor Emeritus. The Board joins the faculty and community in extending its sincere appreciation for his service and celebrates with his family and friends his rich and productive life. It is appropriate that one of his former colleagues and friends, Dr. Andre LaCocque, Professor of Hebrew Scripture, was present to represent the Seminary officially at this service.



Dr. Manschreck brought fresh interpretation to the study of the history of Christianity.

We know that a chorus of heavenly host are exclaiming of him:

"Well done thou good and faithful servant."

Elmhurst B. Sirchio

Continuing Education: A New Look

Looking for a way to continue your theological education without a lot of fuss and bother? CTS may have just the right plan for those holding the Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent.

Officially, this new plan is included as part of the Seminary's Continuing Education program, but technically, it results in enrollment in regularly-scheduled courses on campus.

To enroll:

- * Call the Recruitment Office for admissions materials and a 1994-95 course schedule (312 752-5757 ext. 221).
- * Submit a completed application.
- * Write a short statement indicating why the course of your choice is of interest to you.

* Request that your Seminary (if other than CTS) forward a copy of your transcript to the Director of Admissions.

* Include with the application a \$25.00 check.

As soon as all documents are received, applicants will be notified by the Director of Admissions. Those accepted into the program must call Ms. Cherie Miller (ext. 227), CTS Director of Studies and Registrar, to enroll in the class of their choice.

Courses may be audited for \$100.00. Or if academic credit is desired for the course, \$574.00 is required.

The number of "Continuing Education" spaces in each course is limited and requires the approval of the professor.

In addition, the Seminary recognizes its responsibility to offer Continuing Education options for persons of all ages and in settings beyond Hyde Park.

For example, in recent years, Confirmation classes have been invited to "Confirmation Day." These day-long events feature innovative worship and a batch of workshops for young adults and their leaders.

The date of Confirmation Day 95: January 28, 1995. The site: Elmhurst College.

Bryan Sirchio, noted singer and composer and minister of music, will lead the event for the third consecutive year. Mr. Sirchio has been "instrumental" in drawing nearly 400 young adults and their confirmation instructors to this event in recent years.

Additional information regarding Confirmation Day 95 (including a registration form) will be sent to local churches this fall.

(continued from pg. 1)

He was a distinguished religious leader who served on numerous denominational committees of the Congregational-Christian churches in the 1940s and 1950s and of the United Church of Christ in the 1950s and 1960s. He also served on several bodies of the National Council of Churches and was a member of the Board of Trustees of his beloved alma mater, Oberlin College. In the year following his retirement from the faculty, he served as interim president of the Chicago Theological Seminary, an institution to which he had a life long interest.

After his retirement he headed the Illinois Prisons and Jails Project, a project facilitating the humane and just treatment of Illinois prisoners. Until three years ago he chaired a group of Catholic and Protestant social ethicists, theological students, and lay people who prepared position guides on public policy issues designed to promote lay discussion and decision making.

It has been my good fortune to have known Victor Obenhaus for over forty years. He was one of my mentors during my graduate school days. We co-authored two books, and we were colleagues for fifteen years. During that time we co-taught numerous courses, co-



With affection and respect, Dr. Schroeder expressed profound appreciation for his mentor, colleague and friend - Vic Obenhaus.

chaired several seminars, and collaborated on various projects. Vic, as he was affectionately called by all who knew him, was unfailingly respectful of the personhood of those with whom he came in contact. In some contexts he was an authority in fact, but he was never an authority in principle. He exhibited fairness, integrity, and concern in his dealings with others. He genuinely and selflessly sought to promote the projects of those persons with whom he was associated and to enhance their freedom and self-determination.

The last years of Vic's life were an inspiration to all of us who

knew him during that time. Due to circulatory problems, one of his legs had to be amputated. After arduous rehabilitation work, which he pursued with dogged determination, he was able to regain substantial mobility. However, circulatory problems affected the other leg as well and it too had to be amputated. Again, he pursued rehabilitation with the most determined spirit, and he regained some mobility.

I was privileged to see Vic and his wonderful wife, Marion, frequently during this time. Tribute should be paid to Marion and to their children, Connie, Helen and Mark and their families. If ever a family exhibited love, concern and devotion in a time of physical adversity, this family did.

Our lives and the Divine Life have been blessed and enhanced by Victor Obenhaus' presence in our midst. He is one about whom it can truly be said, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

W. Widick Schroeder
April 9, 1994
Hyde Park Union Church
Chicago, IL

ATTENTION!

PLAN NOW TO ATTEND NEW SEQUENCE OF COMPUTER WORKSHOPS

This academic year a sequence of three workshops on Computers and Theology will be offered by George Cairns, the new Director of Continuing Education, and Bill Blocker.

Please save the dates on your calendar for this new program:

Saturday, October 15, 1994 from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Saturday, January 21, 1995 from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Saturday, April 22, 1995 from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

All sessions will be held at McGiffert House. Lunch included!

Student Profile

"God Saves"

by Rita Wilbur

Editor's note:

Rita Wilbur has just completed her second year as a Master of Divinity degree candidate at The Chicago Theological Seminary. After receiving her undergraduate degree, she took two years "off", as she explains in this sermon, to get a taste of the "real world" before enrolling at CTS.

During this past academic year, she served as a part-time student intern in The Community Church of Westchester, IL.

This sermon was preached at the end of her first year at CTS in her home church, The First Congregational Church (UCC), in Houston, Texas. It is included in this edition of "Tower News" as part of a continuing effort to introduce CTS students called to positions of leadership in ministry.

Well, I have just finished my first of three years at seminary, and I must say it's tough, but it's wonderful. I miss it already, and I've only been gone two days. Of course, seminary is not utopia, we have our share of problems there. But seminary is the only place in my life where everything fits together so well: work, study, play, worship, are all so integrated and connected. And it is a wonderful feeling to be in a place with others who seek to serve that which they believe.

I knew before I even entered college that I would be going to seminary. I majored in religion, and I loved the subject. The thought of spending three more years studying my favorite subject — and without having to meet tiresome science requirements — just thrilled me. But I knew I needed some time off in the real world. After all I was not going to seminary to study religion but to prepare for the ministry...So I took two years off, first for an internship

with the United Church Board for World Ministries in New York, and then for an internship with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, an interfaith peace and justice organization. In many ways those years were more transforming for me than my college years, because now I was not studying the problems of life, but seeing what people were actually doing about it. There is a big difference between studying about life and living it, and I found that some of the most important lessons I have ever learned have been outside the classroom.

There is one time in particular that stands out as the epitome of everything I learned during those two years, and that is the Persian Gulf War. Now, I have to explain a couple of things. First, this was the first time I could remember that this country was engaged in an overt war. An overt war is nothing like covert operations in Nicaragua or a hit-and-run invasion like Panama. Those events by definition are so vague and short-lived that you never really know what is going on until much later. But everything about the Persian Gulf War, from Aug. 2, 1990 on, was live and in technicolor. I had ample time to think, fret, and worry over it.

Secondly, I am a pacifist. I do not believe war ever really solves anything, and as a Christian, I cannot espouse violence as a means of conflict resolution. But until that time, my pacifism, like my faith itself, was largely cerebral and had never been confronted with the harshness of real life. Again, that's not to say I was not sincere in my beliefs, but up until then, all my crises of faith had largely been intellectual; my beliefs had not been tested against the reality of life. Ideas, no matter how good and sound they are, are not reality but an interpretation of reality. And back then I was still young — I still am young — but back then I was younger, still in school. What did I know about life? I had to find out, and the Gulf War was a major reality check.



In the classroom and in the pulpit, Rita Wilbur demonstrates promise for ministry.

Needless to say, the impending war was a major concern at the World Board. We wrote letters and briefs, we staged demonstrations and organized marches. Advent that year was more than just the expectation of Christmas; it was the anticipation of a possible war. But I did not really believe that we would go to war. It didn't fit my intellectual scheme of things, my perceptions of what is real and reasonable. I thought surely Bush and Hussein would realize how silly all this was and would resolve their conflict nonviolently. And the United Nations would step in and provide firm leadership. The peace movement would rouse the conscience of the nation, and the public would not accept war.

On Saturday, January 12, I was sitting in an all-day meeting. The person next to me had one of those two inch TVs and was watching the football game underneath the table, when the game was interrupted and a tiny George Bush appeared on the screen. She alerted the rest of us and gave the TV to Dale Bishop, the Middle East Secretary, who took it into the next room to find out what was happening. A little while later he came back to tell us that Congress had just voted to give Bush the authority to declare war.

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That was when I realized that there would be a war. Nothing could stop it, not even the simultaneous conversion of both Bush and Hussein. No human power could prevent that war from happening. That was the first time I really believed in sin, and that there is a demonic power in the world that is capable of taking the wrongs we do and multiplying and magnifying them until they escape our power to undo. But on that day, I realized that the faith I had placed in the peace movement, in the church, in government leaders, in human power, had collapsed. They had all failed me. My ideas and my ideals were crushed under the weight of this brutal reality.

Many times before in my life when I learned about some injustice or suffering in the world, I had raged against God, crying out, "How can you allow this to happen?" Even though I knew in my mind that *we* are really the ones allowing it to happen, my heart could not accept it. Because I didn't believe in sin, I couldn't believe in forgiveness of sin, so I had to find someone else to blame. So I cried out to God. What was this pretty talk about the coming of the kingdom of heaven when people were starving? What do crack babies care about resurrection? Why should victims of torture love their enemies? After two thousand years, what has really changed? I demanded an answer, but God was silent.

For some reason, this time there was a difference, not in God, but in me. This evil was too great for me to bear. I felt as if I had been killed and laid in the tomb. My destruction was so complete that I could not even rage against God. And even God's silence was preferable to the darkness around me. That is what it means to be poor in spirit.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit," a man once said, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Now I know what that means. The kingdom of heaven was all I had left to hope in. And, my beloved, that was all I needed.

For three days I lay in that tomb, suffering, in despair. And when my

soul couldn't weep any more, in the darkness, in the silence, God was there. God was there. A hand reached down and offered me a thread of hope for the kingdom of heaven, and that thread was strong enough to pull me out. Maybe that hope is only a faint promise, maybe they are only empty words. Maybe. But I tell you I was resurrected out of that tomb into new life, and I say today with all conviction that on that day I was born again.

We in the liberal church do not like to talk about sin and being born again. We prefer to believe that our problems are caused by ignorance, and we are all basically nice people. Pop psychology and self-help movements tell us that we need to think positively and believe in our own power. Well, I don't believe it. I do not think we are capable of saving ourselves.

One theologian says that sin is the only empirically verifiable Christian doctrine. You don't have to look long before you find countless examples of the depths of our sin. And, friends, none of us has clean hands.

But I know this: however great is our capacity to sin, God's capacity to forgive is greater, and however vast our ability to destroy, God's ability to save is infinitely more vast.

There is good news. As we read today in Paul's letter to the Romans, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us, and we have been reconciled to God. *We* are the ones who needed to be reconciled, not God. *We*

are the ones who rage at what we perceive to be God's silence.

But God is *not* silent; God is *not* absent. And to demonstrate God's love for us, Christ became incarnate among us, preaching the power of love and forgiveness, even when we killed him for it. Think about it: when God became incarnate, it wasn't as one of the powerful rulers of the world, or as a ruler in the church. Rather, God became incarnate as a homeless, itinerant preacher who was executed as a political rebel. He had no power by worldly standards.

Yet on the third day, he rose from the dead. And on that Easter morning, all our fights, all our battles were already won. So when we face trials, Paul tells us, God *is* already with us. And however bad it gets, God has already saved us. The kingdom of heaven is not something in the future, it is something that is here now. I understand this now not because of something I've been taught, but because of something I have experienced: the reality of the resurrection.

But why should God even bother to save us? If we are the ones with the problem, why shouldn't God just say, "You made your bed, now lie in it."

Isaiah answers that question in our Old Testament reading. This part of the book was written around 550 BC, during the time of exile. This was a dark period for Israel. For 500 years Israel had existed as a nation. Jerusalem had never fallen. The Israelites believed themselves to be invincible. After all, weren't they the chosen people of God? Hadn't God led them out of slavery and into the promised land? Hadn't God established a covenant with them on Mount Sinai? How could Israel ever fall?

Then in 586, the Babylonian army succeeded where no other army had. They broke through Jerusalem's defenses and invaded the city. They destroyed the Temple and carried off countless numbers of Israelites to exile. How, the people wondered, could this have happened to them, the



Ms. Wilbur completed a full year as a part-time student intern at Westchester (IL) Community Church (UCC).

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Alumnae/i News

Zona Platt Galle...the daughter of Selma and Ferry Luther Platt and step daughter of Herman Johnson (Platt's boyhood friend and CTS classmate) all of whom were CTS students has sent the Seminary substantial materials from Johnson's Journal. The journal addresses his student days. Other family papers which shed light on student life and work in the late twenties and early thirties were also sent. Particularly interesting are his accounts of the seances conducted by some of the students and faculty. We invite others with CTS memories or papers to share them. THE REGISTER issue on the Chicago fire stirred a great deal of interest among our readers. Send such materials to Perry LeFevre.

'29

Marshall Berryhill...still lives in Greenville, PA. He hasn't found any way to live that competes with living in Christ.

'30

Charles Brewster...has found fulfillment and challenge living in a UCC retirement community in Pleasant Hill, Tennessee. After 14 years in residence, the Brewsters extend a warm invitation for others to "check it out."

'38

Marian K. Tate...celebrated her 50th anniversary with UCC Christ Congregational Church of Silver Springs, MD. Rev. Tate helped to establish this church in 1944.

'42

Moray Loring...of Columbia, MO has retired as the Associate Pastor of the First Baptist Church. Rev. Loring continues doing ministry as a part-time hospital chaplain.

'45

Tom Sampson...has published a new book, his third, titled *The Mystic Mirror*. The profits go to benefit the Community Renewal Society of Chicago.

'46

Edith Downing...wrote the text of "When, Like the Woman at the Well" which will appear in *The New Century Hymnal*.

'46

Eugene Wehrli...retired as the President and member of the faculty at Eden Seminary. His retirement ended in February when he became Interim Conference Minister in Illinois South Conference (UCC).

'47

James and Alice Boyack...are well into retirement from teaching at Westminster College. They are active in the Holladay UCC. Jim has worn out three wheelchairs since his days at CTS.

'47

William Lovell...is concluding ten years as Stated Clerk of the Chicago Presbytery.

'47

Arvel Steece...received a Congregational Citation in 1993 from the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches in recognition of "long and significant service to Christ and the Congregational Cause..."

'50

Donald L. Berry...the Harry Emerson Fosdick Professor of Philosophy and Religion, has retired after 37 years on the Colgate University faculty.

'53

J. Samuel Shelby...has authored a book titled: *Is Now, and Ever Shelby: Memoirs of a Minister*. It is published by Sagittarius Publications of Appleton, MN.

'55

David Jamieson...is retiring (as of August 1) as Conference Minister of California Nevada Northern Conference of the United Church of Christ. Before moving to the Bay Area, David completed several years as Conference Minister in Nebraska. The Jamiesons intend to stay in California and will be seeking a new opening for ministry after August 1.

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chosen people of God? Had God forsaken them? Isaiah issues a resounding "No."

But now thus says the LORD,
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name, you are mine.

When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;

and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.

For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior...

Isaiah was telling the exiles not to trust in governments or leaders for well-being. Indeed, he was telling them they did not even need the Temple.

God alone is sufficient, and even though God seems to be far from us, the outward signs of God's favor are absent, yet God is with us and God does save us. Isaiah goes on to say that we are to proclaim God's goodness. God gives us life; we shouldn't hide that gift. We are called to make it known, to renounce the idolatry of power that rule only by oppression, and to proclaim instead the power of God which is exercised when we truly love one another. So we may proclaim with the Psalmist:

God is our refuge and our strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though
the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the
heart of the sea.

The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Israel is our fortress.

Amen, and again I say, amen.

- '55 Eula Redenbaugh...**was appointed in 1993 to the Colorado Commission on Aging by the Governor. She has also been working as the Chair of the Building Committee for Boulder First United Methodist Church.
- '55 Donald Yungclas...**finds himself back in Wichita in retirement...again, after having served as interim conference minister in several conferences of the United Church of Christ. Given his experience and expertise, it might be helpful if Don could stay close to the phone!
- '56 Ursula Elsholz...**sends greetings and best wishes from her home in Bonn, Germany. In recent days, she sustained the loss of her spouse, Martin. Supported by a strong and vibrant faith and the care of family and friends, she finds hope and renewal in this time of loss. She visited the Seminary in the summer of 1993 and maintains an appreciation for this institution and its impact upon her life.
- '56 Mary Harrington...**is the Director of Communication for Shared Ministry in Utah which involves 6 mainline denominations. She is also involved in the Utah Association of the UCC. She is a free lance writer and teaches writing/religious journalism at Weber State.
- '57 Donald Niswander...**claims the title of Rockford's leading Olympian, having competed in a range of running events, cycling, jumping events, you-name-it, securing several medals along the way. In June, he will compete in no less than thirteen events as a part of the Midwest Senior Games in West Chicago.
- '58 Richard Glessner...**was awarded a Faculty Appreciation Award from the Alumni/ae Association of Mt. Ida College, Newton Center, MA for his work as a teacher of Psychology and Philosophy. His wife, Sandra, who teaches English, was also honored. Richard has been the college's chaplain for 30 years.
- '63 Doris Hendrickson...**is a leader in the Peace & Justice movement in her area. She is also the Assistant Director of University Library at Radford, VA. **Bob Hendrickson...**is still at St. Albans Psychiatric Hospital.
- '63 Clarence E. (Ken) Whitwer...**has moved his interim venue to Rochester, New York. For the moment, he is serving as interim pastor of Irondequoit UCC, a larger membership church in New York Conference (UCC).
- '66 Wayne Rydberg...**was recently named to the faculty of The Creative Problem-Solving Institute at the University of Chicago. He is writing *When Life Ends, Living Goes on: A Mourners Guidebook* which is expected out in September 1994.
- '66 Donald Vincent...**became (in 1992) interim pastor of Lyndonville Congregational United Church of Christ in Lyndonville, Vermont.
- '68 James Burford...**of Spokane, WA was called to be the Associate Regional Minister for the Northwest Region Christian Church (DOC). He recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of his ordination.
- '69 Bob Brauningner...**continues to pastor Trinity Church in West Point, NE. **Dee Brauningner...**writes a weekly ecology column for the West Point News along with monthly features.
- '69 Daniel J. Mulhauser...**was on the faculty of the University of Guam, but has been asked to be Director of Novices at the Jesuit Novitiate in Micronesia, located in Koror, Palau. He was a part of a pioneering group in 1969 that received the "D.Rel." (now D.Min.) degree.
- '70 Kent Ira Groff...**recently had a book published by the Alban Institute titled: *Active Spirituality: A Guide for Seekers and Ministers*.
- '71 Gary Massoni...**heads the Citizen's Educational Fund in Washington, DC, a part of the Rainbow Coalition. As in the past, Gary works as a close advisor of The Reverend Dr. Jesse L. Jackson. Although his office is strategically located alongside "The Reverend's", his home remains in Corvallis, Oregon.
- '71 Leah Matthews...**recently began working with the Western Reserve Association in Cleveland, OH.
- '72 Urs Joerg-Keller...**has recently begun an exciting new ministry with the Swiss Bible Society. Prior to this move, he spent 16 years in parish ministry at St. Marks Church in Basel, Switzerland.
- '73 Barbara McCall...**of Claremont, CA celebrated her 80th birthday this past March with her three sons. Her sons are all ordained ministers.
- '74 William Manseau...**is the Director of Emmaeus Institute Counseling Services in Nashua, NH. He is the Chair for Citizens United for Rehabilitation for Errants (CURE), a grass-roots criminal justice reform group. He is also the President for the Massachusetts Association of Pastoral Counselors.
- '74 David Wheeler...**received his D.Min. from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. For three years he has been in Lorain, OH as the Pastor of the First Congregational Church.
- '75 Roger Straw...**moved from Shaker Heights, OH to Community Church in Stow, OH. His wife, **Mary Sue Gast**, received an honorary degree at Commencement, acknowledging her work for The Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society (UCC).
- '76 Harold W. and Roberta Smith...**have undergone training at The Mission Resource Center in Atlanta, GA. The couple anticipate assignment to Mweya Bible College near Gitega, Burundi where Bill will teach Theology and Roberta will teach English as a second language.
- '76 Jo-Ann Terry...**is the Vice President of Henry Ford Community College in Career Education, Dearborn, MI.
- '76, '77 Dennis and Linda Frische-Mouri...**are serving as co-pastors of St. John UCC in Cumberland, IN.
- '77 Enid Griffin...**and her husband are semi-retired but still involved in institutional ministry. She ministers at the county jail, and he ministers in area nursing homes and at the Minneapolis/St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota.

Alumnae/i News

'78

Ted Huffman...of Wright Congregational, Boise, ID, attended a conference this past winter to train him as an interpreter for the new UCC curriculum "The Word Among Us."

'79, '76

Chuck Kutz-Marks...is now the Pastor of the Christian Church in Kalamazoo, MI. **Becca Kutz-Marks**...is the Pastor of First Congregational Church in Athens, MI.

'79

Rodger Accardi...is currently a CPE supervisor at The Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital.

'80

C. David Owens...was called as the Senior Pastor of First Congregational Church in Wilmette, IL. He served briefly as the CTS Director of Continuing Education and the Director of the CTS Center for Church Life.

'81

Nancy Faus...currently teaches at Bethany Seminary. She will move to Richmond, IN, when Bethany joins Earlham School of Theology in June.

'81

Rick Mearkle...and his wife Elizabeth will become Associate Missionaries of the UCBWM this summer. Rick has accepted a call to become the minister of the United Reformed Church in Maidstone, Kent, England, and his Service of Induction is scheduled for September 10th.

'82

Nancy Grow...is back in the States after working in Brazil for 8 years. She authored a chapter titled "Crisis: An Ally of Participation" that appeared in *Participation Works* this past October.

'82

Garrett Kamerling...of Milwaukee, WI is the Wisconsin State Representative for the College of Chaplains.

'82

George Manukas...has moved from Alexandria, VA to Dunbar UCC in Hamden, CT.

'82

Thomas McClurg...is currently the Organist and Music Director for Church of the Savior UCC of Knoxville, TN.

'82 and '84

Larry Colvin...is now working part-time for the Disciples of Christ in IN for their Commission on Community and Global Concerns. He will be leading a medical team to Honduras this summer.

'83

Joseph Dye...is the interim pastor of Faith United Protestant Church in Park Forest, IL.

'84

Brian Campbell Byrne...is involved with the Indianapolis region's sponsoring of 13 Bosnian refugees.

'85

Keran Olm-Stoelting...the Association minister for the Eastern Illinois Association recently participated in a planning seminar for the Third Annual Interim Ministry Network Seminar. CTS graduate **Bachu Devamani** ('92) also participated.

'85, '86

Garrett TenHave-Chapman...is now a Workers Compensation Attorney in Grand Rapids, MI. **Laurie TenHave-Chapman**...continues as the associate minister of East Church.

'86

Janice Hodge...has been approved by her ecclesiastical body to apply as a Fellow with The American Association of Pastoral Counselors. Since graduating from CTS, she has been engaged in pastoral care ministries, specializing in the area of trauma and recovery. Training in her area of specialization was underwritten in part by the Fund for Theological Education two years ago following her commencement from the Seminary.

IN MEMORIAM:

'29 Wallace Mast

'30 Ralph Veit

'35 Eulalia Williams

'44 Howard F. Boardman

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